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ABSTRACT

A year-long study focused on how the teacher-librarian partnership was enacted within different elementary school contexts where there is a literature-based approach for instruction. Teachers and librarians at two schools were observed for a total of 392 hours. Purposeful conversations to gather information or interviews were employed in conjunction with the observation. Eight theoretical constructs emerged from data analysis: (1) partnership events occurred in three ways--purposeful, springboard, and accidental; (2) partnerships supported literature-based instruction; (3) to survive, partnerships must have evidenced support, maintenance, and reward; (4) technology expanded teacher-librarian partnership possibilities; (5) contextual constraints or barriers existed which impeded teacher-librarian partnerships; (6) literature-based instruction had different meanings to different practitioners; (7) literature-based instruction was distinguished from whole language by practitioners; and (8) literature-based approaches were limited by and confounded with skills approaches, district expectations, and eclectic methods. Findings address how the teacher-librarian partnership evolves in the elementary school curriculum and how the teacher-librarian partnership is enacted. (Contains 19 references.) (RS)

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The Teacher-Librarian Partnership in a Literature-Based Approach

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The Teacher-Librarian Partnership in a Literature-Based Approach

This ethnographic study describes teacher-librarian partnerships in a literature-based approach. Paradigm shifts in the fields of reading education and library science simultaneously occurred giving rise to the need for this study. Reading education shifted from basals to an emphasis in literature-based instruction while library science shifted from quantity guidelines for library services to quality guidelines.

Recognizing the intensity of the literature-based movement in the United States in 1988, the International Reading Association ratified a resolution calling for a National Reading Initiative which would combine the efforts of teachers, librarians, and individuals everywhere to reduce illiteracy by bringing students and books together. Librarians published Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs (AASL & AECT, 1988) which emphasized the need for partnerships as a solution to disseminating the exponentially increasing published literature. Both documents' keystones were that students needed to read more literature; within goals of literature-based approaches a similar central focus emerged.

LITERATURE

Two national organizations, the International Reading Association's and the American Library Association's position statements were reviewed. Barlup (1993) surveyed teachers, librarians and students to determine how attitudes about literature change in a literature-based instructional setting. Her results reflected an increased interest in books and more enjoyment of reading was apparent. An implication from her study was that opportunities for librarian involvement in the reading program greatly increase in a literature-based approach.

A survey at the national level is currently being conducted by DeGroff (in press) at the National Reading Research Center. Surveys pose mutual practice questions to both teachers and librarians. How they work together in reading instruction and voluntary reading will be investigated. Interviews and on-site visits will be used to follow-up on surveys which describe frequent incidence of collaboration between teachers and librarians.

Hughes (1993) researched partnerships between a librarian and one teacher in four school settings. She reported that in literature-based approaches the library is used more and the reason for library usage had changed from recreational reading to research. Students were learning how to find answers to their

own questions. Flexible scheduling allowed students to use the library without time restrictions. The library was seen as an important extension of classroom instruction.

Giorgis (1993) completed, at the same time as this study, a case study focusing on the teacher's role of the librarian from an auto-ethnography position. While exploring teachers' perceptions of the librarian in a literature-based curriculum, she actively engaged teachers at her school in collaborative partnerships. In the one year study, only three collaborations developed which fully implemented the librarian's teacher role--planning, implementing and evaluating lessons. Teachers who did not want to participate in the collaborative process used a wide variety of constraint issues.

Literature-based approaches emphasize reading entire works, not abridged texts (Shannon, 1989). Multiple combinations for instructional format and literature selection emerge when the instructional formats continuum and the literature selection continuum are combined. Three patterns for literature-based instruction can be identified: teacher-selected, teacher-directed; teacher and students selected, teacher and students directed; and student-selected, student-directed (Hiebert & Colt, 1989).

Ironically, though, the professional literature, which is one of the resources from which teachers form an understanding of the literature-based concept, is nearly void of teacher-librarian partnership models (Funk & Funk, 1989; Guszak, 1992; Hoffman, 1992). In a majority of literature-based articles, libraries and librarians are never mentioned (Diakiw, 1990; Folsom, 1992; Pace, 1992). How can a partnership hope to be formed when one member of the partnership is ignored?

Within the literature, another deficit exists; there are no thick descriptions of how literature-based approaches are enacted (Guzzetti, 1990). Interviewing elementary teachers, Walmsley (1992) found that the profuse quantity of theory articles on literature-based instruction had not provided teachers with the "bigger picture." In other words, teachers did not have enough information in the article to allow them to translate the theory into practice.

The partnership framework which helped to form the questions for inquiry (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992) was grounded on two theories, team building and collegial trust. Intact work groups exemplify Varney's four elements for a successful team. A congruency of perception reticulates the members of the team (Varney, 1989). Positive working relationships during partnership or team occurrences allow for an eventuation of collegial trust (Little, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

This year long study focused on elementary classroom teachers and elementary school librarians from two schools. Data were collected on a lap top computer, then data were filed and catalogued through Ethnograph (a computer program for data storage and retrieval). Conceptual frameworks for team building and collegial trust guided the central research question, How is the teacher-librarian partnership enacted within different elementary school contexts where there is a literature-based approach for instruction?

Ninety-two site visits occurred for a total of 392 hours for the 1992-93 school year. The librarians' and teachers' activities were observed directly and recorded in extensive field notes, photographs, video recordings and artifacts. Purposeful conversations to gather information or interviews were employed in conjunction with these observations. Interviews were both structured (formal) and unstructured (informal). These multiple sources of data collection provided for triangulation of the data. Two phases of data coding (initial and focused) were used. Coding provides the pivotal link between the data collected and the substantive theory developed. Finally, a cross-site analysis was conducted for the two case studies.

FINDINGS

Eight theoretical constructs emerged from data analysis. Four concern partnerships and four concern literature-based approaches: 1. Partnerships events occur in three ways--purposeful, springboard, and accidental. 2. Partnerships support literature-based instruction. 3. Partnerships to survive must evidence support, maintenance, and reward. 4. Technology expands teacher-librarian partnership possibilities. 5. Contextual constraints or barriers exist which impede teacher-librarian partnerships. 6. Literature-based instruction has different meanings to different practioners. 7. Literature-based instruction is distinguished from whole language by practitioners. 8. Literature-based approaches are limited by and confounded with skills approaches, district expectations, and eclectic methods.

Enactment of a teacher-librarian partnership was facilitated through communication and maintained by consideration, cooperation, compromise and commitment.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

These findings provide both teachers and librarians with valuable insights into the evolution of a partnership. Specifically, teachers and librarians are provided with descriptions of (a) how the teacher-librarian partnership evolves in the elementary school curriculum, and (b) how the teacher-librarian partnership is enacted. Findings concerning the

librarian's role included three specific types of collaboration within three ALA identified roles.

Depictions of teacher-librarian partnerships support the theoretical constructs of team building and collegial trust necessary for partnerships, as identified by Little (1982). Elements of communication leading to an effective teacher-librarian partnership emerged. Linkages between teachers and librarians transpired when team members had the same established goals. Descriptions of these partnerships expand the level of specificity within the literature on team building and collegial trust.

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